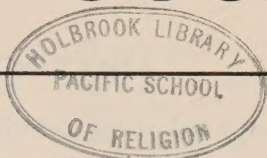


Saul Meyer 12:3

Christianity and Society



THE TENSION BETWEEN MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY
ON THE CONTINENT

by

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT CONFRONTS THE ATOMIC BOMB

by

W. BURNET EASTON, JR., and ROGER L. SHINN

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by

WINNIFRED WYGAL

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CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Due to continued rising printing costs we have finally been forced to increase the subscription price of *Christianity and Society* to \$1.50 per year. We have at the same time made a small change in the format. The number of pages is reduced, but a slightly smaller type will allow us to print the same amount of material formerly offered.

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EDITORIALS

Preaching the Gospel in Our Age

We listened to a persuasive and charming preacher recently who sought to defend the authority and relevance of the Christian gospel against what he called a secular culture. Yet every definition of the Christian gospel which he presented was an element which liberal Christianity shared with secular liberalism. The net effect of his heroic defense of the Gospel was to prove how little the modern church has to offer a distracted and frustrated moral idealism, as it moves into an era in which the waters are over the head of its optimism.

The preacher said that Jesus believed that the world was spiritual while modern culture was materialistic. We know of nowhere in the Gospel record where Jesus champions the so-called "spiritual values" against materialism. If you want a "spiritual" interpretation of life it can be found more unequivocally in Platonism, Hegelianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Unity movement than in Christianity. Furthermore modern culture is not materialistic. Not even the communists who claim to be "materialistic" are really so. Certainly that is not the peril of communism. The peril of communism derives from its idolatry, its worship of a class as the instrument of redemption and of a particular nation as the locus of redemption. It is against the peril of that kind of "spiritualism" that a Christian faith warns, knowing that all men are involved in such idolatries on various levels and that only a radical change of the heart from self-love to the love of Christ can save us. Much of our Christian apologetics is

still engaged in the vain enterprise of trying to prove that "theism" is intellectually respectable. We would do better to assume, as the whole Bible does, that God is; but also that most images of God are false images.

The second point which the preacher made in favor of Christianity was that Jesus believed in "world brotherhood" which he thought had become a more urgent moral imperative than when Jesus taught. To be sure the law of love is a part of the Christian faith, and the universal character of the love commandment is emphasized in the teachings of Christ. But if one wants to make "world brotherhood" into a religion, one might better embrace Bahaism which gives itself to this ideal in its most sentimental form. The Christian gospel achieves no real relevance over the souls of men until they have discovered the law of self-love in their members which wars against the law of love which is in their mind; and have had the despair, induced by this discovery, transmuted into repentance by laying hold upon the grace of Christ, both as a source of a new power to overcome their self-love and as a pledge of forgiveness for the sins of men. We really ought to stop talking so simply about "world brotherhood," particularly in a day when it is not certain whether world community, which is something much less than world brotherhood, is within the range of our historic possibilities. The deep and tragic frustrations of human life and history are simply not taken into account in this naive identification of the Gospel with the moral law implied in the Gospel.

The third characteristic of the Gospel, according to the preacher was its conviction that only "saved individuals" could save a world. The element of truth in this third point is that Christianity does insist that redemption is more than an intellectual enterprise in which the enlightened mind becomes more and more conscious of its obligation to other life. Christianity does insist that we must die to self if we would truly live. But to give this Christian doctrine of repentance a purely individualistic twist is to compound it with the characteristic individualistic prejudices of a bourgeois age and to reinforce the monstrous egotism and Pharisaism of all the good people, of all the "saved" people. Actually there are no "saved" people in the whole world good enough to save the world. The catastrophic drama in which we are involved proves that nations, as well as individuals must repent if they would be saved; but that nations do not repent and that the source of their self-righteousness is frequently precisely the Pharisaism of these same saved individuals who do not understand the depth of their involvement in collective guilt. It is a little too late in the tragic drama of our day to whip up this kind of moral idealism. We must indeed seek to bring our nations under the divine judgment; and we must seek to mitigate the self-righteous fury of victorious nations and the noxious power impulse of powerful nations. But we also need a contrite recognition of the moral inadequacy of every modern nation for the task assigned to it, and of the spiritual inadequacy of every Christian minority within a nation to act as a real leaven of the Kingdom of God. From such contrition a measure of charity and pity might spring. The charity which the world needs today is not a learned charity of "good" people. And the moral vigor required is not the vigor of boy scouts who think the world might be saved if only every one did his own good deed a day.

The real pathos of our day lies in the fact that we have an "idealistic" and "voluntaristic" culture, which is quite incapable of understanding the tragic dimension of our contemporary experience. And the

pathos of our Christian faith is that it speaks so frequently in the same accents as this idealistic culture. Having tried vainly to make a simple success story out of the Cross, it is as confused as a secular culture which knows nothing of the Cross. The Cross turns into a "success" only at the point where human goodness despairs of itself. At that point it becomes the place where the heavens are opened and the divine grace shines through, illuminating our darkness with a new light.

The Character of Ideology

Less than a year ago, when the nation was trying to decide whether or not price controls should be maintained, the National Association of Manufacturers covered the country with large advertisements in which it declared: "If the OPA is permanently discontinued, the production of goods will mount rapidly, and through free competition prices will quickly adjust themselves to levels that consumers are willing to pay. Supply will quickly catch up with demand. Prices will be reasonable and fair to all."

This hope and promise was altogether false and prices began to rise as soon as controls were removed. They are still rising. The American dollar lost almost a third of its value in the resulting inflationary movement. Did the N.A.M. admit its error? It did not. On the contrary it is now before the public with the claim that inflation can be prevented if only the government will stop favoring labor. "Manufacturers and distributors," declares the president of the N.A.M., Mr. Wason, "are at the mercy of wages when determining prices." What he is talking about is of course the effort of labor to catch up with the rising prices, an effort which has failed to close the gap even after the second round of strikes within a year. Meanwhile profits of industry have reached a new high level. The President of the United States has been imploring industry to drop prices voluntarily, lest they place goods out of reach of the average income and thus lead to a depression. Almost everybody tacitly agrees that prices ought really to be low-

ered. But the famous competitive system is obviously not forcing anyone to lower them. Furthermore even the feared depression does not have this effect. Publicly the American business community discounts all speculation about a depression as a sort of treason against the "American way of life." But privately business men consult with one another about what to do with their inventories, and they usually arrive at the conclusion that they can not lower prices, because they must insure a good balance on their books in preparation for the depression which these same high prices are bound to cause.

These conflicting sentiments and actions, these brazen promises and unconfessed errors are so completely ridiculous that they do not come within the realm of rational action at all. The taint of "ideology" could not be more clearly isolated than in these sentiments and actions. The question is whether the taint must be defined primarily as ignorance or as a perverse effort to make the worse appear the better reason. Obviously there is something of both ignorance and perversity in this ideology. It is not mere ignorance. It obviously reveals something of that "vain imagination" which St. Paul identifies with sin. No one could be quite as ignorant of the facts of life as the N.A.M. pretends to be. Obviously the perverse conscience is operating and is consciously or semi-consciously selecting and interpreting complex facts in order to make them appear to justify an indefensible theory of *laissez faire*. The indefensible theory is defended because it is a facade for the interests of the business class.

On the other hand there is an element of real ignorance in this form of reasoning. The business oligarchy of America is actually ignorant. It is excessively parochial. It identifies the luxury of anarchy which only a very wealthy nation can afford with the ideals of democracy and suggests that every other nation which can not afford this anarchy has already slipped into totalitarianism. The factor of ignorance can be isolated by comparing the attitude of our business community with the attitude of

similar groups in Europe. No business oligarchy of any European nation is quite as naive as our own. Most business men in Europe express apprehension lest American business do the cause of democracy irreparable harm by identifying it with precisely those *laissez faire* theories which the American oligarchy regards as the *sine qua non* of democratic life. The peculiar conditions of American life, particularly the dimension of our wealth, thus do create a parochial attitude which must be put in the category of ignorance. One only has to observe a business group in America solemnly dedicating themselves to the cause of freedom to recognize that there is a degree of honest ignorance in their attitude.

But the ignorance is never completely honest. A careful analysis of arguments used will also reveal some degree of perverse misinterpretation of the facts. Incidentally the labor unions are not free of this same ideological taint in their arguments. It reveals itself primarily in their identification with the masses, when actually organized labor, seeking higher wages to match higher prices, gets involved in a spiral in which the unorganized masses, the white collar people, and the professional classes are worsted.

The curious compound of moral and intellectual elements in the social and political attitudes of groups proves that our attitude toward any problem of justice is never a purely rational issue. It is always a moral and religious issue as well. Perhaps it is primarily a religious issue.

The Resources of the Nations

A survey of the spiritual and moral resources of the nations for meeting the problems of our day reveals why the world is in such a sorry plight. Even under the best possible circumstances it would not have been easy to solve the issues which confront our generation. For if our resources were much more adequate, it would still be difficult to achieve the world-wide community which modern technical civilization has made necessary. Actually we are in the

plight that every agent of reconstruction and every new center of power in the world reveals some glaring inadequacy for the task.

In the Orient China is unable to take a position of leadership and assume the oriental hegemony vacated by Japan because it lacks internal unity. It is in fact engulfed in civil war and does not have the power to take any initiative in the struggle between east and west, between Russia and America. The threatened anarchy in India does not immediately affect the world situation; but it adds to the somber picture of a distracted world. The two great nations of the orient are both harassed by internal strife, and neither one has proved that it is able to achieve a stable equilibrium.

In Europe the nation which possesses the greatest degree of spiritual and moral health, Great Britain, has been so greatly weakened by the war that it can not exercise the leadership which is its rightful due and which would, in any event, be most likely to coincide with the needs of the world. The democratic center of the European continent, upon the strength of which depends the possibility of avoiding a communist Europe, has much more in common with Britain than with America. But Britain is not strong enough to exercise the hegemony upon the continent which would redound to European health. It might be worth observing incidentally that Britain could be ideologically stronger than it is, despite its economic weakness, if the left wing of the labor party were not committed to the futility of trying to bow out of the world situation. This new left-wing isolationism, which foolishly imagines that it is possible to contract out of a community of interest in which American power has assumed the initiative, is just as foolish as American isolationism in the decades past, when Britain had the initiative.

On the continent France is spiritually weak, not only because no genuine new impulse has emerged to break the deadlock between the three major political forces—Catholicism, socialism and communism.

France is also spiritually weak because it does not know how to deal with its fear of Germany, being prompted by that fear to economic and political policies which prevent the economic reconstruction of Europe. The precarious balance of political forces in France prevents the establishment of a stable democratic government. The situation in Italy is similar but even more serious.

When the history of our era is written, the most tragic aspect of it will undoubtedly be the degeneration of the generous Marxist dream of a classless society into the horrible realities of a police state. The fact that millions of workers and intellectuals (including some religious leaders) should still regard this state as a genuine realization of all these dreams and should subscribe to the tortuous policy of an insecure dictatorship as a part of a grand strategy, designed to bring the Kingdom of God on earth, will certainly go down in history as one of the most pathetic religious aberrations of our day. Only a civilization which had completely lost its moral and spiritual bearings could produce such confusion. To have a technical civilization capable of producing an atomic bomb and a culture filled with such confusion would seem to spell catastrophe, even if there were no other hazards to our peace.

The spiritual corruption of Marxism and the spiritual confusion of the non-Marxist or at least non-communist part of European civilization is not however the full measure of the moral inadequacy of our generation. The final hazard to peace and to justice lies in America. The very skill in the use of technics which has made our nation the most powerful in the modern world has also produced such a measure of wealth and consequent spiritual complacency in America that we are spiritually inadequate to exercise the responsibilities of our power. Being so far removed from the Asiatic and European points of friction, where our power impinges, is itself a great peril. It means that we are not fully conscious of the measure of our power, nor able to judge the immediate effect of our

policies. We are furthermore only so recently cured of our isolationist impulse that neither we nor the world can be sure that it is a fully mastered temptation. A serious economic depression in our own country might tip the scales toward a new isolationism.

But these difficulties are not yet the full measure of our inadequacy. Our uncritical identification of democracy and *laissez faire* economic theories (increased in recent years because war-time prosperity has prompted us to forget the misgivings we had about our creed) is felt as an embarrassment by every sincere devotee of democracy in Europe. Even the most conservative opinion in Europe knows that an economy can not be as unmanaged as we think. We even go so far as to suggest that we are the only democratic nation in the world, precisely because we are the only one still given to the eighteenth century illusion that there is a preestablished harmony in the economic process, which obviates the necessity of managing the process. Ignorance and self-righteousness could hardly be brought into a more ridiculous compound.

Thus we find a serious economic weakness or spiritual corruption or spiritual inadequacy at every one of the great centers of power in the modern world. We must of course do what we can, despite these discouraging conditions. We must seek to preserve such peace as we have. We must avoid undue hysteria and not permit American conservatism to whip up undue fears of Russia. Russia is technically much too weak to be an immediate threat to us. We ought to do everything in our power to strengthen the United Nations, using the Security Council as a bargaining table between ourselves and Russia and allowing the General Assembly to become a genuine organ of the conscience of mankind, which will prevent American power from expressing itself irresponsibly and which will add the moral authority of world opinion to that part of American policy which deserves such support.

But we must do our duty without any guarantees of perfect success. Christianity

has absorbed too much of the inclination of an historically minded culture to seek the justification of success for every action. There never has been as much of such justification as our culture had assumed. But we are now living in a period of historical frustration in which the hopes for tomorrow are even more dubious than they once were. We will have to achieve a measure of serenity in a tragic age which lacks the resources on every hand to meet its possibilities fully.

The Churches and the International Situation

The churches of America have been able to speak for a remarkable consensus of Christian opinion when they insist, as they have done consistently, that America must assume wide responsibilities in the world community, commensurate with American power. But they have not been able to speak unambiguously about a profounder issue of foreign policy because they lack agreement upon it. They have not been able to say vigorously enough that (a) Europe will fall into economic decay if American economic aid is not given in larger proportions than yet contemplated; (b) that American theories of democracy, with their excessive libertarian emphasis, are an embarrassment to the democratic cause in Europe and that if our nation can not rise above its own conception of democracy it will not be able to help Europe; and (c) that the luxurious standards of life in America in comparison with an impoverished world tend to discredit our cause.

The situation is that we hold the line strategically against Russian communism but that we are not giving enough positive content to the democratic cause behind that strategic line. It may be that we lack the spiritual and moral resources to do this. It may be that the church is itself too deeply involved in the weaknesses of the "American way of life" to be able to do this unequivocally. The question therefore arises whether *ad hoc* groups ought not to be formed within the church which will seek to arouse the conscience of the nation

and remind us of the precarious position in which America finds itself with not enough moral imagination to match our power. Harold Stassen recently suggested that it would be profitable for a wealthy nation, living in a poor world, to dedicate a tenth of its production to world reconstruction. He appealed to the motive of national self-interest in making this suggestion, as one inevitably must. But it was a more radical suggestion than any church organization has made.

The real peril to our nation is not so much the external peril of communism as the emptiness of our cause and the lack of relevance between what we call democracy and what the anti-communists of Europe regard as democracy. In their idea of democracy there is a much stronger sense of community than in ours. General Marshall's otherwise excellent statement at Moscow about the meaning of democracy had this defect, that it was as irrelevant to the broken and maimed communities of Europe as all our other pronouncements. Could we not speak louder on these issues inside of the church even if we can not speak unequivocally for the church?

The Republicans and Labor

The attitude of Congress in both of its branches toward labor, revealed in the Hartley-Taft labor bill, has been so hostile that a good opportunity has been lost to achieve really constructive results in eliminating abuses in the house of labor. The closed shop, for instance, which Congress has sought to outlaw, has developed in America primarily because it was a necessary defensive measure against hostile employers who sought to undermine the power of a union even after it had achieved bargaining status. It is dangerous to destroy this weapon so long as the old hostility remains.

On the other hand a closed shop is a danger to union members if their individual rights are not properly safeguarded. A union with a closed shop agreement has a life and death power over its members. This means that any judicial procedure in

the union must be scrupulously fair, and must have every safeguard of the right of appeal which we have in political society. Many unions are arbitrary in their discipline of individual members. Legislation might well correct such abuses, if there were a genuine interest in justice rather than a desire to lame and maim the power of the trade union movement.

Furthermore many unions are deficient in the democracy of their internal life. They do not have secret elections or any adequate provisions against the peril of an oligarchy which tries to keep itself in power by force, fraud, or fear. It would not be too difficult to make a legal demand of secret elections in all unions. Such a law would greatly improve the quality of our labor unions without weakening them. Union shops do rob the workers of the one weapon against badly run unions, which is their right to leave the union. But leaving a union is not in any case the most ideal way of remedying abuses in it, just as leaving a church usually does not help very much in giving a church new vitality. What is really needed is the establishment of genuine democratic rights inside the union.

If a democratic state really wanted to improve the democratic life of the trade union movement, it would legislate in the indicated direction. The present legislation merely represents the power of government coming down on one side in the contest between labor and industry. This is the more questionable because it is attempted at a time when a rather irresponsible business leadership opposes labor primarily because it still has the power to keep wages on a semblance of parity with rising prices. If this power is lost the disparity between prices and wages will become even greater than it is and the "bust" which will follow an inflationary "boom" will be even more serious than the one now in prospect.

A Request

The issue of *Christianity and Society* for Summer, 1946, is missing from our files. If some subscriber has a copy which he does not need, its return will be a favor to the Fellowship.

THE TENSION BETWEEN MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY ON THE CONTINENT

By REINHOLD NIEBUHR

One of the reasons for the instability of democratic government in Europe is the unresolved conflict between Christianity and Marxism. Marxism is of course divided between liberal democratic socialism and communism. The democratic socialists in Germany are the most explicit and avowed opponents of communism in Germany. In both Italy and France socialism is divided between a right wing which regards itself as belonging to the western democratic tradition and a left wing which believes in united front governments with communists.

Democratic socialism is thus an unstable middle ground between a Christian right and a communist left. On the other hand the Christian parties all have a left wing which shares with socialism common economic programs. The MRP of France for instance believes in the socialization of monopolistic forms of industry, and a left group in the Christian Democratic Union of Italy accepts the general program of Don Sturzo. It has been impossible however to form stable democratic governments with the exclusion of communists, in either Italy or France, because there is still too much tension between the Christian and the liberal socialist parties.

This tension is due to various causes. The Christian parties usually have more radical political programs than they could actually carry out, having become the refuge of conservative forces who have no place else to go. The Christian parties usually contain elements running all the way from extreme conservatism to Christian radicalism; but the radicals in the Christian parties are usually prevented from making common cause with socialists, because of the religious unity of their party. Recently the Catholic hierarchy has become more and more influential in these Christian

parties. Its primary interest is to preserve or to regain a monopolistic position in the nation's educational program. In Italy, through the cynical support of the communists, the Christian party was able to write the prohibition of religious liberty, which was achieved in Mussolini's concordat with the Vatican, into the new constitution. This alliance of extreme right and extreme left produced a violent reaction in the socialist center and alienated even that group of socialists who had been making common cause with the communists.

The difficulties and tensions between the Christian and the socialist parties are, however, not all due to the ambiguous political program and the mixed political forces of the Christian parties. They are also due to the ideological confusion of the socialist parties. Liberal socialism in Europe, whether in Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, or Sweden has an ostensible Marxist basis for its political thought. But Marxism in its orthodox form is dogmatic and revolutionary while democratic governments require a pragmatic politics. Continental socialism has not been able to find a stable theoretic basis for its pragmatic politics. Sometimes it mouths revolutionary phrases in order to compete with the communists. Sometimes it indulges in utopian clichés, such as the belief of Austrian socialist leaders that the United Nations represents the true goal of international socialism. Sometimes it speaks of a "classless" society as the possibility of an evolving democratic process without understanding that the whole Marxist dogma about a class struggle and its final resolution in a classless society can not be carried over into democratic politics. A democratic society may equalise the privileges of various classes more and more; but it must

know that there are functional groups in even the most equalitarian society and that equality of privileges between these groups can never be absolute. Furthermore continental socialism has great difficulty in rethinking its position toward religion, being on the whole inclined to follow the old Marxist dogma of the reactionary power of religion even when confronted with the concrete evidence of religious radicalism. It usually explains the latter as the sheep's clothing used by the Christian wolf to hide his reactionary purposes.

The sober fact is that neither socialists nor Christians have learned as much from the war experience as they thought. Nobody, in fact, has learned as much from the world catastrophe in which we have all been involved as we thought. The most disheartening aspect of the modern world is just this fact that nations and peoples, classes and ideological groups have learned so little. Thus the fanatic power and fury of communism is therefore confronted with ideological confusion rather than clear purpose. And it will gain as much advantage from this confusion as from the economic chaos of Europe.

This is the dark side of the picture. The brighter side is contained in the experience of Britain and of some of the smaller continental nations, particularly Holland and Denmark. It is a significant historical fact that the only socialist party which has ever gained a clear majority in a nation and thus won an unchallenged tenure of secure power is the British Labor party. This is the party which continental Marxists were wont to criticize for its failure to adhere to Marxists principles and dogmas. The British party always combined modern Marxist elements with more traditional Christian radicalism. The Christian radicalism was, to a considerable extent, an inheritance from the left-wing sects of the Cromwellian revolution. This Christian radicalism created a leaven in British political and moral life which has proved to be remarkable resource in recent decades.

British socialism has been pragmatic. It has combined the modern determination to

socialize property in the interest of justice with the old empirical tradition of British politics, the inclination to allow freedom to broaden down "from precedent to precedent," the penchant for achieving freedom and justice in a new situation in the name of restoring some ancient and hereditary "old freedom." British socialism may not always hold the loyalty of the middle classes, through the votes of which it gained a clear majority in parliament. But if it should ever lose an election in the next decade it would be to a reformed Tory party which had accepted enough of the socialist program to make certain that present social security laws and socialization programs would not be destroyed. It may just be possible that the socialist party will try to go too far in the socialization of property and that such a challenge will be necessary. For the British experience during the past winter proves that the question of how much one may nationalize property without putting too much power into the hands of a governmental bureaucracy is actually a question which must be solved from point to point and from case to case. There is no dogmatic answer to that question. The debate on the subject in the British parliament this winter revealed a higher measure of political maturity and wisdom on both sides of the house than could be found in any European parliament and certainly greater than anything heard in our Congress. Our uncritical devotion to free enterprise and our almost neurotic fear of governmental planning even while our unplanned economy seems to be rushing toward disaster, certainly stands in unfavorable contrast to British political convictions of both right and left.

Fortunately there are some new political impulses in continental Europe which are similar to these older British achievements in political thought. In Holland a new labor party has been organized in which the socialists of the older type have given way to a new pragmatic type of socialism and in which the left wing of the Christian party (in Holland this is a Calvinist group) has broken away from the old Cal-

vinist type of politics. Calvinist political parties in Holland are very like Catholic parties. In them Christian piety and bourgeois class interests are compounded into a confusing moral and political compound. The new party represents the most explicit political alliance between radical Christianity and socialism of the non-dogmatic type. This party controls 29 votes in a parliament of 100 votes and now governs Holland in alliance with the Catholic party, which is significantly not quite as conservative as the Calvinist party. The new party must be credited with much of the sentiment in Holland favorable to a free Indonesia. This attitude toward the problem of imperialism is not unrelated to the fact that the missionary group in the Dutch church under the creative leadership of the best known missionary leader in Holland, Dr. Hendrik Kraemer, is active in the new party. While the Calvinists claimed that Indonesia must be held by Holland in order that it could be won for Christ, the missionary leaders declared that precisely because they wanted to win Indonesia for Christ they wanted to give it the freedom it desired.

The new Danish Christian labor party is much smaller than the Dutch party, having only ten seats in parliament. It does not represent a merger with socialism as in Holland, for the old socialist party is still intact. But it does represent a sound and creative religious and political impulse. The Danish leaders are determined to break with the old alliance between Christianity and conservatism and to challenge Marxist utopian ideologies without sacrificing the socialist political objective. A similar party has also been organized in Norway.

In Sweden there is a distinct Christian section in the socialist party which now

governs the country. The older Marxism of Sweden is more doctrinaire than British socialism; but the political program has been very similar. In fact the social and political history of the two nations represent many points of similarity. Sweden was once celebrated by Marquis Childs as the best exponent of the "middle way." Actually the government has socialized less property than the British government. It has however extended "cradle to the grave" social security legislation and has, as in Britain, provided hospital insurance for every person in the nation.

If the whole of the continent were as healthy morally and politically as Britain, Holland, and Scandinavia, we would not have to entertain so many apprehensions about democracy in Europe. It is worth noting that wherever such health exists some progress has been made in overcoming the contradiction between a conservative Christian culture and a radical anti-Christian political program.

The whole tragedy of Europe including the rise of Nazism, is rooted in the confusion created by the fact that a Christian faith which understood the ultimate issues of life did not understand the urgent necessity of achieving a tolerable justice and community; while the liberal and Marxist movements mistook these social objectives for the solution of the ultimate issue. Our post-war situation might be most briefly defined as the impotence which arises from the fact that even the terrible judgments of two world wars have not taught either Christians or socialists the truth about the inadequacy of their grasp of either the proximate or the ultimate issue.

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT CONFRONTS THE ATOMIC BOMB

By W. BURNET EASTON, JR. and ROGER L. SHINN

PART I

BY W. BURNET EASTON, JR.

The problems raised for mankind by the discovery of atomic energy are disturbing to thoughtful people. If the statements of the atomic scientists are true, the more one really knows about what has been done and can be done with atomic energy, the more disturbed one becomes. In fact it is not just disturbing; it is overwhelming. Today we have the interesting spectacle of frightened scientists turning to the Church for help. Perhaps I have not read the right material or heard the right speakers but most of what I have read or heard said by Churchmen is not very helpful; neither is it particularly profound, nor particularly Christian.

The general tenor of most of the "Christian" discussion of atomic energy seems to be along this line: "We now have in our hands the possibility of either destroying our civilization and perhaps mankind itself, or of leading mankind to hitherto undreamed-of heights. The whole issue depends on whether the Churches can lead people into the paths of morality and brotherhood before greed, selfishness, and lust for power use atomic energy to destroy us." Then usually follows a long peroration on the Church and Christian ethics as the only saviors of our civilization. We are told that it is a race between Christianity and worldwide destruction. Frequently General MacArthur's famous statement that this may be man's last chance is dragged in somewhere.

All of this may be true enough and it makes good oratory, possibly even good homiletics (although that is less certain), but it is not particularly helpful nor profound. It is certainly not particularly Christian. It is only restating what the scientists have already said when they turned to the Church for help. If ever there was an illus-

tration of the charge made by *Fortune* Magazine a few years back that the Churches lacked leadership and only repeated what was already being said,¹ this is it. Unless Christian leaders and the Christian Church can say something more profound and more Christian in this situation than the high-minded secular thinkers, they had better close up shop. I believe there is a peculiarly Christian word that can be said and must be said about the problems raised by the discovery of atomic energy, but first we shall have to disabuse ourselves of some very deeply held false assumptions.

One of these assumptions is that there is a direct connection between the salvation of our civilization and the truth of the Christian faith, that the success or failure of Christianity depends in some very real degree on its ability to prevent man from destroying himself and his society. This is the assumption of the frightened scientists who are turning to the Church for help. It is the assumption of those who attack the Church by asking: What good is your religion if after two thousand years you have not eliminated man's self-destructiveness? It is also the assumption of those Christians whose only answer to this attack is that Christianity has not really been tried yet. The answer that Christianity has not had a fair trial is true, but in connection with the atomic bomb question it is stupid. It is stupid for at least two reasons. One reason is that there is not the remotest possibility that the Churches will convert enough people to a real Christian ethic fast enough. If this is our only hope we are all doomed men already. The second and more profound reason is that even the minority who

¹*Fortune*, January, 1940.

really try to be Christian are not Christian enough to guarantee a wise and Christian use of this almost incomprehensible power.

It is not surprising that the secularists make this false assumption, particularly when they hear Christians making it. It is, however, surprising, or at least pathetic, that Christians should make such an assumption. According to the New Testament and according to the facts of history, there is nothing in the Christian religion which guarantees the permanence of any civilization. Rather, according to the New Testament not only are all civilizations under the judgment of doom, but the world itself must come to an end. Because, until the discovery of modern means of destruction, the end seemed to be hundreds of millions of years off, many modern Christians stopped thinking about the significance of the end. This was very superficial. In principle, it does not make any difference whether the world ends tomorrow or 500,000,000 years from now. The New Testament has always said that there would be an end and that the end would be pretty rough, to put it mildly. For the New Testament, this world, societies, and indeed life itself, are but a temporary experience. Moreover, the success of the Christian Church and the validity of its faith does not depend and never has depended on its ability to save societies or prevent physical death. The Church did not save Roman Society, but it saved Romans who were in a doomed society; the Church did not save Feudal Society, but it saved men and women who were in Feudal Society. There is no guarantee that the Church can or will save Modern Society, but if it preaches its gospel it can save men and women who are caught in this society. The thing to get into our heads and into our pulpits is that the validity and glory of Christianity depends not on the former, but on the latter.

This is the Christian word that the Church must proclaim to an atomic age, but it is difficult for people, even Christian people to receive. The assumption of the connection of the success and validity of

Christianity with its ability to save our society is deeply held. This is one of the places where the acids of secularization have badly undermined our Christian thinking. We, at least in America, so like the creature comforts of our civilization, and are so enamored with its material constructions that we unconsciously jump to the conclusion that our world and our civilization are good and that their destruction, *ipso facto*, would be bad. Our love of this world is more easily illustrated in the personal than in the social realm. Consider the number of people, even good Christian people, who automatically take it for granted that death for any but the aged and decrepit is bad. Even ministers of the gospel assume that if a young person dies, it is a tragedy. Actually nothing could be further from the Christian truth. (I do not mean to minimize or scoff at the tragedy death can and often does bring to those who are left behind to carry on without a loved one.) According to Christianity death is a release. To assume that if a person dies at twenty he never has a chance to live or to fulfill his destiny is heresy. But we have gotten to the place where, even among Christians, all our judgments of what is good are made in terms of this world. Consequently the destruction of our own life or of our civilization seems an unmitigated evil. This is both an heretical and a ridiculous conclusion. As long as we allow it to persist, particularly in the Church, we will have nothing to say to a world so desperately in need of the Christian assurance.

One of the first tasks, then, of the Church in reference to the atomic bomb or anything else is to disabuse the Church and the world of the idea that the success of the Church is contingent on preventing wars or saving man or society from destruction, or that the validity of the Christian faith is in the slightest imperiled even if the whole world be destroyed. (The world will end sometime and if we are elected to be at the finish it will be exciting but not important.) Christianity has never saved societies and has never prevented death. It has saved and can save men and women in any society and give them eternal life.

Moreover, in so much of our discussion about atomic energy we seem to have forgotten the fact of God. According to Christianity, God created the world, with atomic energy, and man. Further, God did not allow man to discover this tremendous power until He was ready that man should discover it. Whether it is God's intention to use this means to bring this world to an end, or to lead it into a new era of creativity, it is impossible for us to say. (In view of the New Testament admonition to preach the Gospel to the whole world, a task that is not remotely accomplished, the latter alternative seems quite probable.) But we can say that whatever God intends He will accomplish, and that His purposes are good and righteous altogether. God knows about atomic energy and He knows about men. He is more concerned about what will happen than we can possibly be. If it is His will that this new (for us) power is to be used creatively He will provide the means and show the way; if that is not His will, God and His intentions are still good. Whatever happens God is on our side. If we could only understand that, not just as a cliché but as a fact, we could live confidently and serenely whether our allotted span be days, or years, or eons. And we shall have something to say to our world.

Many people will accuse the point of view here expressed as being a "throwing up of the sponge," a retreat into other-world escapism. No apology is made for the other-worldliness. According to the New Testament, man's true home is not this world but a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." But that the recognition of our own and the world's transitoriness necessarily implies throwing up the sponge does not follow. It is true that Christianity can and has at times degenerated into pure escapism. Any high position can be perverted. On the other hand, a real consciousness of our other-worldly ultimate destiny and of the power of God, can, has, and ought to give added impetus for dealing courageously and creatively with the problems of this world. Certainly St. Paul never doubted where his true home was; certainly he never relaxed

in doing all that he could in this world. One reason why he accomplished so much in this world was his confidence about the next. If we could really achieve the sublime nonchalance of Christian Faith about our own fate and the fate of our society, we should be far freer to tackle the tragedies of our world and more likely to find the solution to the problem of atomic energy.

PART II

A REPLY BY ROGER L. SHINN

The central contention of Mr. Easton's article needs the clear and bold statement that he gives it. We should make it absolutely plain: Christianity is not an adjunct to anything. The very character of a religious faith is to claim to reveal the meaning and significance of life, not to support something else which contains that significance. It is an insult to faith to call upon it, along with political sagacity, the wisdom of the social sciences, and the rest of our human efforts, to prop up tottering world orders; faith refuses to be a prop, even though it be called the most important one.

Thus I heartily agree with Mr. Easton that Christianity is not instrumental to the security of our civilization, and that its truth does not depend upon whether it succeeds in the function we may assign it. My difference comes at this point: I regard it as a far more serious thing than does Mr. Easton that man may blow up his civilized world or end his own history. The point of issue comes in the relation of "other-worldliness"—and even the most naturalistic faiths have some of it—to historical destiny. The issue concerns three emphases.

1.

It is true that this civilization and this planet are destined to come to an end, and that it makes no basic difference in principle that the end looms as a more immediate possibility than we had expected. Religions of posterity and faiths that found the meaning of life in an infinite progress of the human race have always been pathetically foolish. Possibly the discovery of atomic energy puts us closer to the New

Testament situation than any other age has stood since apostolic times. The church was founded upon the conviction that eternity was impinging upon time, that in some sense the cataclysmic end was near. It was a true instinct that prompted so many journalists to reach for biblical language to express their thoughts when the news of Hiroshima broke. In that month I read in secular sources probably more references than in the rest of my life to some of the destiny-fraught passages of the Scriptures—the story of the “fall” in Eden, of the rebuke to human pride at Babel, of the dramas of apocalypse. In this sense it is possible that our new danger may bring us nearer the real religious situation.

But granted all this, it seems to me that there is a tremendous difference caused by the fact that it is now *man* who threatens to undo the history ordained by *God*. It is the difference between death, which is part of human finitude and of God’s creation, and suicide, which is an intrusion, an unhealthy distortion of life’s meaning. In biblical prophecy and apocalypse, it is God who in one of His final mighty acts brings history to an end. Now it is man who in blatant self-assertion, in fear-nourished pride, threatens to take his destiny into his own hands and hurl himself to destruction. This is the miserable arrogance of the creature who never learned to serve his Creator, the final blasphemy of man who thought that he could be God.

2.

Although I agree that our modern culture has erred in trying to find all the meaning of life within tangible, historical existence, I am compelled to regard death more seriously than does Mr. Easton. To call death a release seems to me more typical of Pythagoreanism, certain strains of Platonism, and some ancient mystery religions than of Christianity. If some of these currents entered Christianity, they hardly became normative for its interpretation of life and death.

Of course faith cannot regard the significance of life as a matter of its length. It is ridiculous to say that the purpose of life

is to stay alive. Contemporary civilization has been too much inclined to do that, and as Mr. Easton says, the church has not spoken its message clearly enough. But even within faith, death remains serious; it is a major crisis of human experience. To overcome its threat to the meaning of existence is a tremendous victory of faith, not a matter of course. In the Creed it is only after the stark bluntness of the words “dead and buried” that the affirmation of resurrection is made. Only after it has looked at death in all its inescapable inscrutable power can faith rise to affirm that death has lost its sting and the grave its victory.

Obviously there is a greater symbolism than glorification of physical life in the gospel accounts where Jesus raises the dead. Obviously there is more in the agony of Gethsemane and the Cross than the pain of physical death. But it would seem fair to say that the Christian experience which produced the Gospels and which has breathed in the life of the church usually affirms a really significant value to human life in history. The most “other-worldly” of the Gospels records the saying, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”¹ Within Christianity there is no room for a careless attitude toward life. To destroy life, either through wanton carelessness or sin, is evil. It is an offense against the meaning of creation.

The basic affirmation of Christianity in regard to life and death is put, with tremendous dialectical power, in the words: “He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” It is absolutely clear that mere survival is not of final importance, and that to place the meaning of life within itself is to destroy its meaning. But the very problem of finding life indicates the importance of that which must be given.

¹John 15:13. St. Paul, who more than any other New Testament writer shows his contempt for death, still sees its significance (Romans 5:7-8). If this element were totally lacking in Paul, I should feel compelled to correct him with other Christian insights, just as I do his doctrine of the state, his sex ethic, or his ideas on the place of women.

Thus far my differences with Mr. Easton have probably been matters of emphasis and expression. I disagree more basically on his interpretation of God's sovereignty over history. It seems to me thoroughly dangerous to say that God's plan for man's use of atomic energy will be carried out—that He has destined it for creative use or for destruction and that His intention will be executed. This line of thought would demand that we say it was God's intention that six million Jews die in the recent European carnage, that uncounted millions of men live today in fear of secret police, that men should suffer as they have in history's many reigns of terror. With such a conception of sovereignty, how can we avoid saying that "whatever is, is right"?

Interpretations of history have been truer to the Christian experience when they have said that God is battling the hosts of evil—Satan, or the "principalities and powers," or the anti-Christ. The conflict is real. Wicked men defy God's purpose and His will is distorted and disobeyed. This has been the course of history, and it will be the same if men turn atomic energy to human destruction.

Does this represent a limitation upon God's sovereignty? Only if that sovereignty is conceived too mechanically. The problem of evil, always serious for faith, is intellectually insuperable only if God is conceived as an efficient cause, running the cosmic show through secondary efficient causes. But does the Christian conception of the sovereignty of God have anything to do with efficient causality? As Emil Brunner says, "God is Lord, He is not causality."² It would seem better to say that the sovereignty of God is perceived only through faith, that it cannot be objectified like the law of gravitation and applied unerringly to empirical situations. Within the context of faith it makes sense, because God confronts man with the problem of salvation. Here it can be said that God is truly omni-

potent. For no historical destiny of the individual or of the human race can blunt the fact that God confronts man as his Judge who offers to be his Savior. A situation of universal destruction will not change that; it will not destroy the meaning of life under God and the need of man for salvation. It may even be a means of salvation, for so God makes the wrath of men to praise Him.

But it is wrong to objectify the sovereignty of God so that we say that men will not destroy civilization unless He has planned it that way. This denies the tremendous significance of human freedom. The whole conception becomes artificial when Mr. Easton joins it with an unwarranted biblicism, and suggests that destruction probably will not come, since the Gospel has not been preached to all the nations.

Does this mean that the sovereignty of God is of no significance outside the context of faith? This would not be quite true. It remains a fact that the proud rise against God only to be brought to ruin. But the pattern is not neat. The innocent are brought to ruin as well. The devil is at work, to use the traditional language, and only within faith and its ultimate perspective can we discern that God makes even the devil His instrument.

Thus we may say that man, in stark opposition to the righteous will of God, may destroy his civilization and life. This may be exactly the opposite of God's *intention*—if anthropomorphic language is at all adequate here. But in that event, God's *sovereignty* will not be abrogated. For in those very events, men can turn to Him in repentance and faith, and forgiveness and salvation will be real. Faith will see God coming in judgment, and will discern within His wrath His love.

* * *

It can be seen that I criticize Mr. Easton's remarks from a position basically not far from his own. I would only second his central convictions. If the Christian facing our world should be "perplexed but not unto despair," I am grateful for these clear

²*The Divine-Human Encounter* (Westminster, 1943) p. 99.

words against despair; my question is whether Mr. Easton is sufficiently perplexed.

There is, as Mr. Easton says, a "sublime nonchalance of Christian faith," which we should claim in these days. Men in battle sometimes found moments—perhaps at the start of a dangerous mission for which they had volunteered—when they realized that they had removed their lives from their own keeping, and that no amount of straining or worrying could preserve them. Then, upon occasion, there was a bit of inner serenity when they could move into their mission, the power of the haunting desire for survival temporarily broken—and, incidentally, their nerves better fitted for their duty. If Christian faith can break that worry, that anxiety for the morrow, it will prepare men for the battles of our age. They can then fight with a better chance for life; and death, if it does come, will be turned into life.

PART III—REJOINDER BY W. BURNET EASTON, JR.

Not only am I grateful for Mr. Shinn's generous treatment of the main point I tried to make, I am also grateful for his criticism and for the opportunity of replying. The whole business should sharpen the Christian thinking of all of us and that, I presume, is the main purpose of our journal.

As Mr. Shinn suggests, our main difference is in his third point. I shall treat the first two criticisms briefly and then turn to the third.

Regarding the first criticism, "that it is now man who threatens to undo the history ordained of God," I find myself unimpressed. According to my understanding of both history and the Bible, God normally works through men. It is true that in the more apocalyptic passages there are to be "earthquakes" and other natural disturbances (but the results of an atomic explosion fit strangely into apocalyptic images, although I would not belabor the point.) However this expression of apocalypticism has always seemed to me a side issue and oriental imagery. Most of God's action is

brought about by men who, consciously or unconsciously, act as his agents. This is true also of his judgment as in the case of Pharoah, Sargon, Nebuchadnezzar, etc. Toynbee in his *Study of History* makes it clear that it is individuals or the minority who are decisive for the births and the deaths of civilizations. Should it be God's intention to end history by an atomic explosion I see nothing inconsistent with his past methods as revealed to us in the Bible and history. Neither do I think it quite accurate to call this suicide, although it is a reasonably satisfactory descriptive term. In genuine suicide there is a deliberate willful intention to destroy oneself. In the destruction of the world by an atomic bomb, there might be genuine suicidal motives on the part of a few people, but for the vast multitudes of more or less innocent people it would hardly be an act of real suicide.

In general I am quite ready to accept Mr. Shinn's second criticism and am glad he made it. It was not my intention to minimize the seriousness of death. Death is the complete and absolute frustration of every earthly hope and ambition. I also believe that God, having given us life, wants us to live as fully and creatively as we can, and that he wants us to make life as free and creative as possible for others. In my article I was not writing about death from this point of view. I was merely trying to use it as an illustration, and I still think it a good one, of the degree to which multitudes of people, even Christian people, make all their value judgment about what is good in terms of this world. Death is very serious, but for the Christian it is not the end. For the Christian, "Death is swallowed up in victory." We use that as a pleasant quotation to give comfort at funerals, but we have not developed its significance for daily living.

A more basic difference arises in Mr. Shinn's third point. Before, however, going on to sharpen the issues regarding our understanding of God's sovereignty, I will admit that to say God probably will not destroy history because the Gospel has not been preached to all nations smacks of "an unwarranted biblicism." (Although I realize

the world may be blown up, I really do not think it likely and I just pulled a quotation out of the "hat" or Bible—a practice I despise in others.) On third and fourth thought, however, the quotation and its implication do not seem to me altogether bad. It should not be pushed too far—not as far as I did in my article. Still and at the same time, I am not sure that it is totally without significance. But this is a minor point.

Regarding Mr. Shinn's major criticism, I think he has put his finger on one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult problem of man's relation to God. I do not think I conceive of God as working mechanically. At least I would not say dogmatically that if the world is blown up in, say, 1960, God had planned it from the beginning of creation. But neither should I say he had not. I am not sure that I am enough of a philosopher to follow Mr. Shinn's argument about efficient cause. I should rather approach the question in a different way.

The problem, of course, is a problem of evil. Obviously it requires more space and time than either of us can give it here. It seems to me that either God is in control (and I mean complete control) or he is not in control. This, I think, is the significance of "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's will." I do not think this is an unwarranted biblicism.

It seems to me that Mr. Shinn makes a separation between God's sovereignty and God's intention that is unjustifiable. To my thinking God must be able to work out his intention or else he does not have real sovereignty. While I do not pretend to be able to understand the whole doctrine of election, St. Paul's discussion of the rejection of Christ by the Jews in Romans 9 to 11 seems to me pertinent. The Jews were "elected" to reject Christ in order that God's larger intention, his method of salvation for the world, could be accomplished. Does this deny freedom? It does deny absolute freedom but not qualified freedom. We are free to deny God, but such defiance brings our own frustration. Even our de-

fiance and frustration fulfills God's purpose as in the case of Israel's rejection of Christ—or, as Mr. Shinn rightly quotes: "God makes the wrath of men to praise Him." (I probably should say that I conceive of God as working dialectically.)

What, then, about the suffering in the world? Was it "God's intention that six million Jews die in the European carnage"? Either God must have permitted it, which amounts to the same thing as intending it, or else He is not in control.

Does not this make God a fiend? Not at all—or at least not unless we measure good entirely in this world's terms and assume that death is pure tragedy. Those who died, I suspect, are much better off. A more serious problem, as Mr. Shinn suggests, are those who live on in agony and fear. Why does God permit this? I simply do not know. But either He must or He is not in control and therefore not the God revealed in the Cross and Resurrection.

My own thinking sees only two solutions to this. One is that if the cross means anything it is that while God permits and even intends suffering, He shares all the agony of the most agonized. The other is that God's ideas of what is Good and Evil go beyond our ideas of Good and Evil and transcend them. This also seems to me part of the significance of the Cross. At that time, the Cross seemed utterly evil, but now we know that it was God's plan and that it was actually good.

Does this not upset all our standards of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong? In a sense it does. I am coming increasingly to believe, and I think it a sound Biblical position, that the only true Good is submission to the Will of God as we see it. For Christians of course it always will be the Will of God in Christ.

I do not know whether I have really answered Mr. Shinn's criticism. I may not be perplexed enough, but I am too perplexed for comfort. What is said here is offered tentatively and too briefly. At present it is the only solution I see to combining God's sovereignty with His goodness. I should be glad to have the opinion of others.

ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY AND THE IDEA OF COMMUNITY

By R. C. WALTON

Since the end of the sixteenth century there have been three principal chapters in English history, and in each of them Nonconformity played a significant part. The first of these was colonial expansion beginning in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, westward to the Americas and eastward to India. The hunger for religious toleration at a time when the very idea of "liberty for tender consciences" was novel and revolutionary, combined with land hunger—for copy holders were losing their holdings, rents were rising, and tenants were competing hotly for farms—made the new world beyond the Atlantic attractive to persecuted and dispossessed yeomen. Across the sea there was land in plenty and, what was equally important, in a Puritan colony, "the saints great and small" might be recognised for what Thomas Goodwin declared them to be, "the richest treasury that I know God hath above ground elsewhere on earth."

The second principal chapter was the establishment of responsible parliamentary government beginning in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Baptists and Independents were quickly drawn into active participation in the political and constitutional struggle between King and Parliament. They were not pietists, ready to accept the sufferings inflicted by tyranny as their share in the sorrows of Christ, but men who believed that religious liberty and political liberty were indivisible, and were prepared to fight for their freedom in the political arena and on the soldier's battlefield. For them the major issue, both in religion and politics, revolved round the question—Where does the ultimate human authority rest? Granted that God is supreme over all the earth, to whom has He delegated power? In the Church, does power rest in the Pope as God's vice-regent, or in the Crown as

Supreme Governor and the Archbishops and Bishops as Lords Spiritual, or in the synod of clergy, or in the members of the local church, pastor and people alike, gathered at a church-meeting? In the State, does authority rest in the King and his advisers, in a tyrant or an hereditary oligarchy, or in the people represented by Parliament? Baptists and Independents who found the seat of power in church life to be the meeting of the gathered church, and who, therefore, rejected the ecclesiastical authority of King and Bishop alike, were bound, if they were politically conscious at all, to come to a similar position in affairs of State and to be ardent Parliamentarians.

The third chapter in English history was the establishment of an industrial system of economy in place of an agricultural and domestic system. This began in the third quarter of the eighteenth century and was dominant throughout the nineteenth century. Many of the new manufacturers were of yeoman stock, the social group from which Dissent drew much of its support. It is not surprising therefore that many of the great industrialists had separatist connections or were supporters of the new Methodist Movement. They were, as a class, austere, hardworking, and greedy of gain. Naturally they did not criticize the new industrial system by which their wealth was acquired, but there is evidence that their social consciences were not entirely dormant. Paul Mantoux writes of the manufacturers who were dissenters:

"Naturally they belonged to their class and time. They knew nothing of what has been expressively termed social compunction, and they never for a moment doubted that they had a right to wealth and power. But in a world of coarse hard upstarts, they

were exceptional in that they acknowledged a duty to their fellow men in general, and their own workmen in particular."¹

If there was little social compunction amongst the Dissenting industrialists, there was little also in the official pronouncements of the Dissenting denominations. One can turn over page after page of church records, or of the minutes of Association meetings without finding a single protest against child labour in factories, though there are frequent resolutions against the slave trade. Individual non-conformists, however, among the new factory workers were leaders in the working class struggle. For example, in 1801 Lieut. General Simcoe in his report to the Home Office on the food riots in the Exeter and Tiverton district wrote:

"They both were certainly directed by inferior tradesmen, Woolcombers and Dissenters, who keep aloof, but by their language and immediate influence govern the lower classes . . . The numerous associations of Woolcombers (who, as they boast, consist of sixty thousand persons in different parts of the Kingdom) being for the most part Dissenters are just objects of attention to Government, and to those who support the constitution of Great Britain against Republican machinations."²

By far the most potent influence of Nonconformity upon the social struggles produced by the Industrial Revolution was the training of democratic leadership amongst the workers. Their Sunday Schools and church meetings were training grounds for democracy and centers of culture. Not only were children and adults taught to read and write, but weavers and spinners who had no share in managing anything else were educated to manage the affairs of the chapel. They learnt to think, to make decisions, to be tolerant of another point of view, to accept responsibility and leader-

ship. Archibald Prentice, a Manchester social reformer summed up the efforts of the Sunday School teachers in these words:

"With the single undeviating purpose of promoting the eternal welfare of their pupils, they were preparing them for the fit discharge of their social and political duties. They were creating thought amongst the hitherto unthinking masses."

II.

Some of the roots of the English Labour Party and of the Trade Union Movement are thus in Nonconformity, but from the middle of the nineteenth century the political affiliations of Dissent were with the Liberal Party, and the height of Nonconformity's power and influence coincides with the dominance of Mr. Gladstone. Now the minutes of denominational meetings do refer to public events. In 1882, for example, the Yorkshire Association of Baptist Churches meeting at Bingley for its annual meeting passed a resolution of "deep sympathy with Mr. Gladstone in the unprecedented difficulties with which he and his cabinet have to contend." The virtual disappearance of the Liberal Party from the political scene has been accompanied by the virtual disappearance of Nonconformity from spheres of influence in the national life. Such power as it possesses is now more apparent than real. The Ecumenical Movement has drawn together the Anglican and the Free Churches in common action so that Nonconformity is represented on public occasions and on committees for moral and social welfare, but Nonconformity has no distinctive program on public questions, and since its hold upon the loyalty of individuals is fast diminishing, it would find little support for such a program if one were promulgated.

This decline almost to insignificance in public affairs was not entirely due to the way in which Nonconformity was bound up with the fortunes of the Liberal Party. Several other factors have contributed to the disaster. It is the fashion amongst certain modern writers to blame Protestantism for the evils of the capitalist system. The

¹*The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 477.

²Quoted from *The Skilled Labour*, J. L. and B. Hammond, p. 200.

precise nature of the interaction of seventeenth century Puritanism and Capitalism is a complicated historical question which cannot be popularized, as these writers have often attempted to do, in a few sentences.

The accusation, however, has increased the distrust of those churches which derive from Puritanism. Quite apart from the question of the genesis of capitalism, the popular portrait of the Puritan and of his successor, the owner of the "Nonconformist Conscience," makes the modern shudder. It is the antithesis of all that our contemporaries find attractive, and to proclaim "a New Puritanism" is to cry in the wilderness. The moderns only know the Puritan's plain dress, his prohibitions, his austere theology and severity of life: they are ignorant of the quality of moral purpose which the Puritan Movement built into the stuff of the nation.

III.

The major reason, in my judgment, for the failure of Nonconformity was its inability to resist the lure of success in the nineteenth century. During the preceding century Dissent had entered upon a period of 'withdrawal,' being preoccupied with barren theological debates and quarrels about organization. Then came a triumphal return to public favour when its chapels were crowded to hear the famous preachers. Yet, in this period, Nonconformity forgot its essential contribution to the life of the nation—the creation of compact, local communities where men and women were encouraged to be free, diverse, and responsible people. It is worth while to examine this contribution in its seventeenth century setting.

Mr. Lewis Mumford, writing of the Reformation period, argues that

"With the coming of Protestantism the old fellowship in the city weakened: cleavages in matters of faith increased the forces of economic disruption and further destroyed the possibilities of creating a united front. The validity of the universal Church was denied: the reality of the group was

denied; only the individual counted on earth as in heaven: nominalism or social atomism."³

This was certainly the final result, but, in England at least, there was a significant intermediate stage. The reality of the group did not disappear immediately though it changed its character. Its place was partly taken by nationalism, by a new love of one's country and pride in its achievements. For the Separatist churches there was the narrower but intensely vital fellowship of the "Holy Community," based upon the covenant God made with His "saints" and which each man made with his fellows. An example may be taken from the records of a Separatist church in London which was constituted in 1616.

"Hereupon ye said Henry Jacob with Sabine Staismore, Rich. Browne, David Prior, Andrew Almey, Wm Throughton, Jno Allen, Mr. Gibs, Edwd Farre, Hen. Goodall and divers others well-informed Saints, having appointed a day to seek ye Face of ye Lord in fasting and prayer, wherein that particular of their Union together as a Church was mainly comended to ye Lord; in ye ending of ye Day they were United, Thus, Those who minded this present Union & so joyn-ing together joyned hands each with other Brother and stood in a Ring-wise: their intent being declared, H Jacob and each of the Rest made some confession or Profession of their Faith and Repentance, some ware longer some ware briefer, Then they Covenanted together to walk in all God's ways as he had revealed or should make known unto them."⁴

Here was a closely knit fellowship, self-governing, yet linked with other local groups in fraternal association. It was a group united by a common faith and a common experience of persecution. It had a conception of ordered liberty which can be seen in the insistence upon discipline.

³*The Culture of Cities*, p. 71.

⁴Baptist Historical Society, *Transactions*, Vol. 1, p. 2054.

It was, for example, disorderly for a "gifted brother" to preach without the commission of the church: to choose its ministers was a group responsibility. The fellowship was not concerned with massed humanity but with a selected number of persons living in a society. It was a fellowship in which a man might be himself and might exercise his distinctive gifts. Yet the group took responsibility for the growth in grace of each of its members. It sheltered them from the world and saved them, on the one hand from being selfish individualists, and, on the other hand from being cyphers in an expanding, impersonal society.

As the years of the eighteenth century went by, as trade and the Empire expanded and the Industrial Revolution threw up a new race of powerful industrialists whose roots were in Nonconformity, the essentials of the "Holy Community" were distilled away. The fellowship of the gathered church, less vital now than in the seventeenth century, no longer disciplined certain broad aspects of life. Instead of the gathered society there was the confident individualist, in fact independent of the church's fellowship and discipline even when a member of it. The disintegrating pressure of this new individualism encouraged the growth of a type of church which was no longer a true community. Spurgeon's Tabernacle, the City Temple, Union Chapel Manchester, potent as was their evangelical influence upon the multitudes, had broken away from the true genius of the "Holy Community." They were not compact local groups of free, diverse, and responsible persons, where "the joy of one was the joy of all and the hurt of one was the hurt of all," but preaching centers where men gathered to be fascinated and uplifted by the magic spell of the preacher. The majority of Nonconformist chapels were never as successful as the great preaching centers but their aim was identical—to build up a large congregation by the power of evangelical preaching.

There are, however, nonconformist communities in present-day England which escaped this disastrous development. Good

examples may be found, for instance, in some of the industrial valleys of Lancashire. These churches may be a little rough and ready in their methods but they are true communities. They are integrated with the life and culture of the district, and in their activities a member can find scope for his abilities as well as intellectual and spiritual food. They are communities where men and women are known as persons, and are honoured for their gifts which "differ according to the grace that is given to us." There can be, within the closely knit group, a smudging of the personality, a dulling of the fine edges of character, an ironing out of that distinctiveness which saves a man from being a robot. The life of these communities is not individualistic but personal. Individualism is mere difference from others; a fully personal life is a growth in stature brought about by contact with, and appreciation of the lives of others. An individualist is one who, in his actions, disregards the well-being of the group; a person is one who finds his own unique life in a society. To establish communities of persons was the achievement of Nonconformity in the formative years of its history, and it is the achievement of certain churches today.

It is in the creation and maintenance of such compact Christian communities that the chief contribution of Nonconformity to the national life still lies. To fulfill its mission it must forget its ambitions to attract large crowds of outsiders to the Sunday evening preaching service—an ambition which it is never likely to achieve in the modern world. It must concentrate upon the less spectacular task of building up Christian fellowships in which the infinite variety of human personality can find full satisfaction, Christian character is built up, and men and women are saved from being either competitive individuals or impersonal nonentities. This is the true character of a Christian community:

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit;

to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit." (1 Cor. xii 8-9)

Nonconformity is flexible enough to invent the proper methods of maintaining such a fellowship. At the center of its life, however, the group must set the church meeting for it is there that the ordinary man takes responsibility. Here it is necessary to keep firmly in mind the nature of the church as a divine society and not a human institution. The church meeting is not primarily "democracy in action," nor a business meeting. Business has to be transacted; the method of doing so is "democratic" in that the matter in hand is fully discussed and decided by a majority vote, but the real significance of the church meeting lies deeper. It is the occasion when God speaks to the church as a church. The members gather together and wait upon God. This waiting, however, is not merely passive: it is an action. The members gather together with their diversity of gifts—experience, wisdom, vision, skill in prayer—and when its spiritual resources are mobilized, the community waits for God to speak. "As they ministered unto the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said . . ." The word of the Lord to the church thus assembled may be a word of command or a message of consolation, or a judgment upon the church for its faithlessness. Here the principle of the Priesthood of all Believers is most adequately expressed in church life, for here the church member is expected to exercise not so much his business ability, though that is of value, as his spiritual gifts: to contribute to the treasury of the church from his store of spiritual wisdom and experience.

IV.

The present violent reaction against nineteenth century individualism often takes the form of enthusiasm for collectivism wherein men are depersonalized and dealt with in the mass. Yet there are indications that men are searching for new

forms of community life. Their quest may be more subconscious than conscious at the moment, but this felt need may well revolutionize the structure of society. An example of this natural desire for community is to be seen in the demand for a new city. The "fantastic muddle" of an insensate industrial town; the "shapeless Giantism" of London or Chicago, make true community life and a true civic sense impossible. The modern town-planner has as his purpose the creation of cities where the old pride of being a citizen of no mean city may be restored, because its inhabitants are no longer cyphers and their lives no longer impersonal. For example, the plan for the rebuilding of Plymouth is based upon the "precinct principle": the division of the city into groups or precincts each with its own church, public library, club with a meeting hall, committee rooms, art and craft rooms, games rooms and outdoor recreation space together with a small shopping center, each precinct being surrounded by a green belt. The plans for the new satellite towns, so far as they are known, are built upon the same principles. The purpose behind this new type of town planning is to restore the opportunities for community life which have been so largely lost in the overgrown metropolitan cities of recent decades.

Here, in the attempted revival of true community living, is a significant opportunity for those Nonconformist churches in whose tradition there is just that kind of intimate community which modern man needs. If they are equal to their task they can be a group which holds the balance between the old selfish individualism and the drift to a condition of society where the individual is anonymous and a part of a soulless mass. A true community is one which stands between the individual and the State, saving him, on the one hand from isolation, and, on the other, from being an impersonal cog in the machine. This, the Nonconformist churches might be in the next decades of English social history.

THE SPRING CONFERENCE

By WINNIFRED WYGAL

At the request of several members of the Fellowship, this synopsis of the Spring Conference at the Riverside Church, New York, May 22-23, is offered. The program committees would welcome suggestions from absent members, even those at a distance, as to topics or speakers for Fellowship conferences.

It is suitable to begin this review with the business meeting which is always a part of these semi-annual conferences. The relief project carried by the Fellowship under the guidance of Paul Abrecht for two years continues to be signally successful considering the size of our fellowship. In addition to a large number of members who are regularly sending CARE food parcels to specific families in Europe, over \$1,500 has been received in cash and relayed in packages to Europe through Mr. Abrecht's efforts.

The Fellowship labors under some financial difficulties due to increased costs and somewhat irregular contributions from members. It is hoped that a large proportion of members will send their usual contributions, regularly and—if lapsed—soon. Beyond this journal which is not self-supporting, and a slight secretarial fee, the Fellowship incurs no expenses and needs only a nominal income. A voluntary committee plans to stimulate F.S.C. groups in several Seminaries and Universities over the country, so that its ideas and this magazine may have more currency.

Dr. David E. Roberts of Union Theological Seminary opened the conference with a discussion of religion in higher education, particularly as he had observed it in recent trips in the central-west. He found many colleges unaware of current trends in Christian thought. Fundamentalism is still surprisingly strong among students; and professors, in their effort to break with this fundamentalist hold, take up the scientific-

liberal-social-gospel approach which is often unrealistic about the forces of history. Hostility to Christian doctrines comes not so much from physical scientists as from social scientists who cling tenaciously to uncriticized assumptions and dogmas. Students who have never heard a non-fundamentalist but distinctively Christian approach are inclined to be apathetic to religion. Often the young veterans are an exception and see the futility of the somewhat brittle intellectualism being offered. The discussion of the address brought out some of the achievements of the Student Christian Movement and various church foundations. The discussion also turned on the academic preparation of religion teachers, who too often are prepared in a narrowly-specialized field but must teach a wide range of subjects.

Dr. Richard Fagley, of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace of the Federal Council of Churches, led a discussion of foreign policy, with particular reference to Greece and Turkey. He pointed to the negative necessity of a dyke against Communist expansion; however, he emphasized that the policy rests upon traditional assumptions of foreign policy and reflects a dominant military influence. The discussion produced various responses. Dr. Hans Simons stated a view which he had previously elaborated before the Union student group of the F.S.C. Accepting the present policy as a temporary expedient, he called for an early revision of it in line with a more creative use of the United Nations. Others emphasized the strong necessity of the Truman policy. There was general agreement that whatever the merits of the present program, there is urgent need for a more creative foreign policy directed toward world economic recovery.

At the Friday morning discussion Prof. John Bennett reviewed Dr. Eduard Hei-

mann's recent book, *Freedom and Order*, with Dr. Heimann and others participating in the discussion. Most of the problems which were discussed are reflected in Dr. Bennett's review in this issue of *Christianity and Society*. Prof. Paul Tillich raised the question, for which no one had an answer, as to whether there is any group (corresponding to the proletariat in Marxist thought) which might be regarded as the bearer of the Christianity which Dr. Heimann finds essential in our age.

Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr in his talk shared some of the concerns resulting from his recent three months in Europe, speaking particularly of England, Holland, Sweden, and Denmark. Some of his emphases are indicated in his editorials and article in this issue. He said that the dominant groups in most countries had learned little from the war and that their Christianity was of a very conventional sort. Even in the most stable countries, like Sweden, the outlook is not favorable: socialism, a high standard of living, and security have led to complacency and moral disintegration, as shown by the excessively high divorce rate and break-up of the home. On the other hand, a prophetic Christian minority, though not utopian about the future, shows fortitude and wisdom in taking practical steps. Such men as Hendrik Kraemer of Holland are to be found in every country. Danish Christian leaders show great understanding, and reflect not only the influence of Kierkegaard but also the Christian social doctrines of Grundtvig. Dr. Niebuhr emphasized that the present situation calls for realistic analysis and pragmatic decisions,

but especially for a devoted Christianity which will act from motives of faithfulness and duty without illusions about historical success.

Dr. F. Ernest Johnson closed the conference with a report of the economic activities of the Federal Council of Churches. The Pittsburgh Conference in February has been reported in Information Service and the public press: Dr. Johnson gave some of the background and atmosphere of this conference. His remarks and the general discussion considered the particular relation of the church, both local and national, to the economic situation.

In summary, this conference raised especially the following issues:

1. How can the churches be awakened to realize that the philosophy of American capitalism is not only irrelevant to Europe but ruinous if exported at this time?
2. Is any group in society the "bearer" of justice and truth in the present situation. If it is not the proletariat, is it the church, or the colored races; or is there no such group at present?
3. Must freedom or order receive our chief emphasis now?
4. What does the present chaos in Europe say to Christians about a philosophy of history, or about the relation of self-giving to practical results?
5. Can America be lured away from doctrinaire "slogan thinking" of the left and right to a pragmatic, pluralistic approach to problems of economic justice and efficiency?

BOOK REVIEWS

FREEDOM AND ORDER: Lessons from the War. By *Eduard Heimann*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947. Pp. xiv, 344; index. \$3.00.

This book by a member of this Fellowship is one of the wisest books about the relation between Christian ethics to contemporary and indeed to perennial social problems that has been written in recent years. It is a rare thing to find so closely interrelated the insights of the social philosopher, the technical knowledge of the social scientist, and the perspectives of a profound Christian theology. The author is steeped in contemporary history and he sees it from the point of view of one who has lived long in both Europe and America.

The presupposition of this book—a familiar one to readers of this journal—is that we live amidst events that refute the faith on which most of our thoughtful contemporaries have based their lives, the faith that all things tend toward harmony, toward a good *order*. This faith means in effect that there is no real problem of order versus freedom because either through education and reform or through revolution a situation will be created in which rational men will apply reason to life in such a way as to insure order without endangering freedom. A painless, uncoerced order in the nature of the case is no threat to freedom. But throughout this book we are conscious of what Heimann calls “the experience of the abyss yawning before us, and of the strange way we have been saved this time.” (P. 333)

There is in this book no fixed pattern for the universally right relations between freedom and order and justice. There must be a new creative solution in each situation. This view makes Heimann reject Catholic solutions in terms of a fixed conception of natural law. Order is the most fundamental value. If there is no order men cannot live at all in a society that is as inter-

dependent technically as ours. If order does break down, the necessities of life will force men to adopt some form of order that is tyrannical. If order is the basic value, freedom is the highest value, the one most necessary for the spirit: “it is the air which we must breathe for the spiritual realization of ourselves.” (P. 10) Justice is the principle by which order and freedom are kept in right relations, but also it is true that “among the things that justice owes a man is his liberty.” There was some discussion at a meeting of the Fellowship as to whether or not Heimann subordinates freedom to order too much. I cannot see that he does that, because he recognizes that freedom is the most necessary value for the spirit. He does not believe that we can neglect the problem of order without having a kind of order that will prove incompatible with freedom.

Heimann criticizes Capitalism, orthodox Socialism, and Communism from the point of view of this understanding of freedom and order. He finds that all are defective in their failure to face the facts of power and the permanent dangers to freedom. Communism thinks in terms of a temporary dictatorship that will disappear and leave rational men living with rational institutions happily ever after. He does believe that Communism has realized a measure of justice in spite of the oppressive state. He faces the grim facts about Soviet tyranny and the inequalities that have been introduced into Soviet society for the sake of expediency, but in spite of all of these dark aspects of Communism he believes that it may become more moderate as its achievements become more secure. As for Soviet foreign policy, he says: “one must not fall into their snares and one must not give up in disgust over their snares”—a good motto for our diplomats.

The Socialism that Dr. Heimann favors is the same as that presented in the Fellowship's statement of principles of which he

was one of the authors. It is a pragmatic and pluralistic form of Socialism, with acceptance of private ownership of agricultural land, with a variety of types of social ownership and control of major industries, without a dead level of equality and yet with no more inequality than is compatible with fellowship and neighborliness. It is institutional Socialism without the orthodox philosophy.

Democracy has a strong claim to be the highest form of political organization for the Christian to support. A democratic society will not necessarily be a Christian society. Indeed, the virtue of democracy is not that it guarantees ideal justice but rather "its institutional admission that it is not just and requires special institutions, most important the political and civil liberties, to re-establish justice." (P. 289) The possibility of democracy depends upon a spiritual climate that cannot be taken for granted anywhere and which in all probability cannot exist apart from strong Christian influences.

The most important thrust of the book is this emphasis upon the Christian faith as the only perspective that makes possible the maintenance of democracy. Christianity is the one corrective for the illusions that are characteristic of both liberalism and Marxism. Christian faith in God who transcends every social order and Christian realism concerning the perennial sources of injustice and the Christian Church as a community of grace within history are essential for the existence of any order that is compatible with freedom; however Christianity is not emphasized as a prop for the values of civilization but as the truth about God and man.

I hope that this book is taken seriously not only by theologians but also by social scientists.

JOHN C. BENNETT

THE MEANING OF EXISTENCE. By Charles Duell Kean. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947. Pp. xiv, 222; index. \$3.00.

It is not common for a parish minister in the U. S. to produce so thoughtful a book as this one, by a member of the Fellowship and contributor to this journal. Charles Kean's thought avowedly stems from Kierkegaard, but has been influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. The marks of these thinkers are often most noticeable, not where they all agree but where different ones show distinctive emphases. Thus the result is not a simple synthesis, but a creative contribution to current thought.

Among the recent additions to current vocabulary is *existential*, a word which has been used more often than understood. Confusion might be expected from a word used to apply simultaneously to some of the most penetrating Christian thought of the last century and to the almost nihilistic French existential philosophies. What both meanings of the word share is the insistence that man's thought must take account of the situation of the thinker, who is no dispassionate observer of the world but who inevitably stands in the situation of *existence*, involving the ambiguities, conflicts, and incongruities of the inner life of the individual and of outer social situations. For Christian thought influenced by Kierkegaard this has meant the demand for a profound faith capable of meeting *existence*. The French secularists have lopped off the religion and pronounced a philosophy whose keynote is incongruity with no answer or at best the heroism of despair.

Dr. Kean's concern is the religious understanding of existence. He shows convincingly that the present crisis in Western life cannot be answered by a mere reordering of institutions or rethinking of intellectual concepts. It is one of the rarer crises of history when man, shaken and confused, lacks even the criteria for judging his problems and must once again come to terms with the meaning of his own existence.

Two aspects of existence which demand an answer are tragedy and anxiety. *Tragedy* rises out of the fact that man is subject to ambiguous, conflicting demands which he cannot resolve; the conflicts, inherent in the

social situation, are deepened by ever-present self-interest. *Anxiety* is rooted in man's capacity to transcend history, to question the meaning of his existence, and to see the threat to personality involved in life and especially in death. These problems cannot be eliminated by any possible social order; they are inherent in existence itself. *Religion* "is man's effort to solve the problem of Existence by making sense of his encounter with tragedy and anxiety" (p. 114). Its creative core is *myth*, which is "the description of man's existence in terms of a story related to history but oriented toward eternity" (p. 155). It is carried out in creed, cult, and conduct, but if any of these is made the heart of religion, its essential meaning is lost.

The modern world has had no adequate religion to face its crises. Christianity long ago lost its vitality for most people, who have sought to understand the meaning of life in terms of such religions as Communism, Fascism, and Capitalism. But the Gospel, rightly understood, can enable man to "live creatively in moments of epochal crisis" (p. 152). It "is the Word spoken to man on the level of Existence in such a way that man discovers the depths of his own personality and is freed from slavery to tragedy and anxiety" (p. 154). These are not overcome, but the conflicts of life are brought into a creative tension instead of destructive opposition. But the Gospel is this only if man comes to understand the meaning of the Cross and Resurrection, and to participate in them in all his actions and decisions.

The author develops his thesis carefully and defines his terms with extreme precision. This makes the first part of the book rather unexciting reading, as the basic concepts are developed. However, to those who have followed current theological controversy with its mass of waste verbiage due to plain misunderstanding, this careful definition is in most cases a virtue. For example, in contrast to current polemic for and against "reason," Kean carefully defines the function of reason showing just what he considers its adequacy to be. A

clear statement separates Christian revelation from common misconceptions of both naturalism and "super-naturalism": "Christianity is an interpretation of the life and teachings of Jesus, and of the experiences of a few key figures in the apostolic age which speaks to men in terms of their own Existence in such a way as to reveal the meaning of their own personalities and to free them from tragedy and anxiety" (p. 160). The succeeding sentences, together with the previous definition of myth, show clearly the absolute seriousness of Christianity as religion, together with a strict rejection of anything approaching superstition.

The main question which one might ask about the book is whether the author does not yield to a tendency to abstract, intellectualistic thought and expression. The framework of the book involves a distinction among three levels of life—history, intellect, and existence. On the first level, men are related only to events; on the second, to ideas and interpretation; on the third, to themselves. To some this set of distinctions may seem more artificial than helpful. For example, is there any use in writing about history apart from evaluation, as a "cause and effect pattern of change" in which "free will is an academic hypothesis" (p. 54)? One might say that there is no such thing, and that while such an abstraction may be useful to economics or some aspects of sociology, it does not contribute to understanding history itself. No politician would dare think in such terms.

The author is here consciously distinguishing his thought from Tillich's more dynamic conception of history (p. 90). He considers the distinction partly a matter of definition; but it goes farther. In his emphasis upon the "Now" and the "I" which mark the crucial character of existence, he is in danger of following Kierkegaard into a devaluation of history in which the "We" and the dynamic of history are overlooked. True, the author constantly insists that existence rightly involves an I-Thou relationship to others, as opposed to autonomous individuality with its I-it relationship.

Yet one misses the simple *we*-consciousness of so basic a Christian expression as the Lord's prayer. This tendency reaches its most dubious point when the author would refute Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* with a *Sum ergo cogito*. Fortunately the book returns in its final development to a higher appreciation of the historical character of existence.

Another limitation of the three-level framework of the book may be its ignoring of art. Might not an examination of life on all its levels give at least as much importance to the creativity of art as to the work of intellect? But the only mentions of art refer to the intellect's activity in judging the attractiveness of phenomena or recognizing their beauty.

Although we can be grateful that the author does not take refuge in pious phrases of uncertain meaning, some of his reformulations lose the directness of traditional language. After the repeated statement that the outcome of man's encounter with the Gospel is "the clarification of existence," one occasionally wishes for the simpler phrase, "the forgiveness of sins." With all the misconceptions which cling to the latter phrase, it has a vivid character which the first can never equal.

This tendency to abstract language may help some and bother others. In any event this is a book of penetrating insight. It confronts contemporary life and thought with severe and searching criticism and with a statement of Christianity which avoids extravagant and sentimental promises, yet claims absolute seriousness and validity for the Gospel message.

ROGER L. SHINN

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF TODAY. By F. W. Dillistone, Westminster. 122 pp. \$1.50.

We have been told of the value of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit for interpreting the social relevance of the Church in every age, but rarely do we find any vital presentation of that doctrine. Theologians and liturgists like to talk about the usefulness of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but it

is very unusual to find either using it with very much vitality.

Perhaps the reason is that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit defies that kind of objectification which has successfully made so much theology barren, abstract, cold, logical, and unrelated. Perhaps the Holy Spirit must be known through living experience in the fellowship of faith, or it becomes simply a theory without much moving power. This reviewer does not know all the literature on the subject, but he has yet to find any presentation with the power itself that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit ought to arouse, if the claims made for it have any meaning. As a parish minister selecting the hymns for worship, he has always found the Whitsunday, or Pentecost selections strangely unsatisfying.

The fact is that the Christian brotherhood as known from within on the basis of Christian decision has a power which saves men from being mere creatures of history. The brotherhood of the Spirit, in Christ Jesus, is the Christian faith in action—socially relevant whenever real, revolutionary whenever found, prophetic in every institutional relationship. But the doctrine so known in life seems no more able to survive captivity on paper than some of the rare plants and animals. Or, changing the metaphor, we find ourselves so often in the position of people trying to understand how an electric stove cooks food when we have never seen one with the current turned on.

The Reverend F. W. Dillistone, who comes in September to the theology chair of the Episcopal Theological Seminary, Cambridge, has attempted to make the doctrine of the Holy Spirit clear and vital and relevant to modern life. It must be stated that he senses the problem, but it must also be stated that he does not quite deliver. But it may be because the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is either so intimate and personal as to transcend rational description or it tends to become cold and academic. Perhaps Mr. Dillistone has done all that is possible.

In the treatment of this little volume, which is as valuable as any which has come to the attention of the reviewer, the author is basically Biblical. He sees the Old Testament understanding of the "spirit of breaking down and building up in society" and the New Testament understanding of the "spirit-filled society through the Messiah" together as still adequate to describe the Christian impact upon the world.

Mr. Dillistone applies this understanding in four areas—life, power, order, and glory (meaningfulness). The four areas are well chosen, and it is to be pitied that the author does not make as much of them as he could. He never quite grasps the fundamental ambiguities involved in each—such as the ambivalence of the life-death drive in individual psychology and group existence, the dialectical nature of power in history, the tragic problem of the Church's relationship to the problem of order arising from the self-authenticating pretensions found in all institutional life, and the full dimensions of the problem of meaningfulness in experience.

While the author does not exploit the full possibilities of his four areas, they are nevertheless well chosen areas and the treatment is good as far as it goes. His presentation of the necessary connection between life and personal relationships makes the doctrine of the Holy Spirit fundamentally related to living. His appreciation of the power of God in the inner lives of the members of the fellowship relates the Resurrection to history by means of the Holy Spirit. His appreciation of Archbishop Temple's insight (in *What Christians Stand For in the Secular World*) that order must be created, not simply found, makes the Holy Spirit a functional concept. His awareness that the problem of meaning involves decision makes the Holy Spirit the continual turning point in individual and group experience.

The final chapter, "Veni, Sancte Spiritus," is very well done, although it suffers from the same limitations of perspective as the rest of the book. Particularly interesting is Mr. Dillistone's use of the Tennessee

Valley Authority as an illustration of the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the natural order. In this final chapter, the author sees the Holy Spirit as the agent for repentance from trusting in the possibilities of this world as finalities, of maintaining a creative contact between the redeemed and natural orders of creation, of giving men a relationship to God through a personal Word—of challenge and of promise—rather than through a natural environment; and being the basis for a continual renewal of the life in Christ.

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Today is worth reading.

CHARLES D. KEAN

GOD IN HISTORY. By Sherwood Eddy. New York: Association Press, 1947. Pp. x, 283; index. \$2.75.

Sherwood Eddy, grand old man of a hundred causes, has turned in his latest book to the problems of a Christian view of history. The many recent writings on this theme by eminent theologians have not yet reached far into the American church; there is need for someone to tell "Christian" America that Christianity has inherently an intense and original concern for history. Sherwood Eddy writes in a popular, readable style that should carry his belief and crusading spirit to many whom the theologians do not reach.

We may hope that the church will heed many of the ringing declarations of the book. Everyone has become aware of the problem of history; Sherwood Eddy reminds us that "*we are the problem*" (p. viii). The difficulties call not just for thought. Eddy is most eloquent when expressing his ardor for economic justice and racial equality, and his insistence that both America and Russia must contribute to the future. He sees the pluralism of history and rejects any schematisms; but he is certain that *God is in history*. His basic position is soundly Christian: God is "in every act and incident of history" (p. 272), but there is no event in history "in which God alone is present" (p. 255).

Mr. Eddy believes firmly in progress in history, though he criticizes secular philosophies of automatic progress. He quotes Reinhold Niebuhr frequently, in at least partial agreement, but holds to a view that belief in God should lead us to expect progress in history, though it may be evolutionary or revolutionary.

This is not what would be called a "scholarly book." Mr. Eddy has read widely, but only a Toynbee could conduct a scholarly tour around the globe and across the six thousand years of history that are surveyed. Students will find over-simplifications, as Eddy acknowledges, some inconsistencies and inaccuracies, and questionable judgments. But in a field which has too often

been left to the scholars, there is a place for a man of action to have his say.

A Christian interpretation of history is finally a matter of testimony rather than of study. The problem of history for the Christian inevitably must end with the eighth chapter of Romans—with the faith, in Mr. Eddy's words, that God "is able to bring ultimate meaning and value out of all possible suffering" (264-5). Those words from a man with Sherwood Eddy's record are worth more than from half a dozen theoreticians. We would do well to listen when he says: "Those who experience God in their own lives will have no doubt that God is working in all men and in all history, as he is in themselves" (p. 272).

ROGER L. SHINN

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The Rev. W. Burnet Easton, Jr., is professor of religion at Lawrence College, and author of *The Faith of a Protestant*. The Rev. Roger L. Shinn, recently appointed instructor in philosophy of religion and systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary, is author of *Beyond This Darkness*.

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